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CIA/RR CB 65-59
October 1965

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INTELLIGENCE BRIEF

STATUS OF SOVIET ARMS AID TO CYPRUS

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE
Office of Research and Reports

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STATUS OF SOVIET ARMS AID TO CYPRUS

In mid-August the USSR reportedly rejected a request from Cyprus for additional arms aid, ostensibly because the Greek Cypriots still had not assimilated the Soviet equipment -- valued at more than \$10 million -- already delivered. The weapons included medium tanks, artillery, motor torpedo boats, and personnel carriers. Support equipment for surface-to-air missiles (SAM's) has also been delivered to the island in spite of NATO pressures in early 1965 to halt such deliveries. Although Moscow has been willing to provide arms aid in an effort to exploit Turkish-Greek differences over the Cyprus issue, it has attempted to minimize public reaction to its role in the supply of weapons to Cyprus by transshipping the equipment through the United Arab Republic (UAR). Only the actual SAM's and some associated gear remain to be delivered from the UAR. Currently, most of the Soviet weapons are being operated by Greek personnel (described by Athens as army veterans hired by the Greek Cypriots), and training in the operation of Soviet weapons is continuing in the UAR and on Cyprus.

1. Background of Soviet Arms Aid to Cyprus

Following the outbreak of hostilities between the Greek and Turkish communities on Cyprus in late 1963, Archbishop Makarios sought sources for arms aid. After his requests were rejected by Western suppliers, he turned to the USSR in March 1964. Despite initial objections to the introduction of Soviet weapons on the island expressed by the Greek government to Nicosia and an attempted veto of the agreement by the Turkish Cypriot Vice President of Cyprus, an agreement for arms aid was signed in Moscow by representatives of the Soviet and Cypriot governments on 30 September 1964.

Soviet policy in the northeastern Mediterranean area has aimed primarily at disrupting the southern flank of NATO. In an effort to exploit differences between Greece and Turkey over the Cyprus issue and to complicate relations with their NATO allies, Moscow injected itself into the dispute by providing arms aid to the Greek Cypriots. The USSR has attempted to minimize public reaction to its role in this arms supply, however, by using the UAR as an intermediary.

2. Arms Agreement of September 1964

A. Value and Terms

25X1B Although few details of the 1964 agreement have been published, the overall value of the agreement (based on the cost of equipment) is estimated at about \$14 million and the credit at \$7 million (assuming a discount of 50 percent from list prices). The credit probably was for a period of at least 15 years at an annual rate of interest of 2 percent.

25X1B [REDACTED] Repayment presumably will be made in hard currency or in commodities at the option of Nicosia. Technical assistance -- the training of Greek and Greek Cypriot personnel in the UAR under Soviet or Egyptian instructors -- probably also was included in the agreement.

B. Equipment

Most of the equipment under the 1964 agreement is believed to have been delivered and deployed on Cyprus. The equipment included the following items:

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The SAM equipment provided to Cyprus by the USSR is the most advanced item in the aid package. Deliveries of SAM equipment began in late February 1965, and by the middle of March three Greek ships carrying SAM components, but no missiles, had unloaded at Cyprus ports. Diplomatic reaction by Greece's NATO allies caused the deliveries to stop abruptly in mid-March, and some Greek ships destined for Cyprus returned to Alexandria and unloaded SAM equipment. Subsequently, a group of 30 Greek SAM personnel (reportedly only one of three such Greek groups) returned from Cyprus to Greece. Cypriot Minister of Interior Georkadjis reportedly stated that if Greece refused to send SAM crews Cyprus would get them from the UAR or the USSR.

Early in April 1965, Nicosia stated that in the absence of a UN or NATO guarantee against a Turkish attack it intended to proceed with plans to make its SAM system operational. Greece apparently relented, and the 30-man group en route to the UAR for training returned to Cyprus. Shortly thereafter, deliveries of military equipment were again started. Greek freighters delivered five military cargoes -- reportedly including SAM gear -- during the period mid-April through early June. If these reports are accurate, most of the SAM equipment reportedly scheduled for delivery to Cyprus is probably now on the island. To date, however, there is no reliable information indicating that any of the actual missiles are on Cyprus or that SAM sites are under construction.

3. Conclusions

The Soviet policy of offering arms aid to Cyprus has served Communist objectives well. The introduction of Soviet arms has made the USSR a significant factor in the Cyprus dispute; it has decreased the likelihood of immediate "enosis" (the union of Cyprus with Greece, to which the USSR has always objected); and perhaps most important, it has served to weaken the southern flank of NATO.

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